

UKRAINE ASSERTS ITS SOVEREIGNTY

The declaration of sovereignty

While the Congress of the CPSU was continuing its work, the Ukrainian parliament reconvened. But before it could resume its work on the declaration of Ukraine's sovereignty it first had to turn its attention to the approaching miners' strike. The opposition was able to capitalize on this and to press home the argument that only after proclaiming the republic's sovereignty would the Ukrainian authorities be in a position to deal with the miners' problems. Rukh's representative, Mykola Porovsky, read out a statement from one of the mines in the Donbas urging the parliament not to delay the declaration any further, and Yemets, speaking in the same vein on behalf of his colleagues in the People's Council, declared the opposition's full support for the miners and their political demands. Seeking to place all the blame for the miners' grievances on Moscow, Masol, too, agreed that the situation made it necessary 'to speed up' the adoption of the proclamation of sovereignty.

This task had been facilitated by the fact that the parliamentary commission on state sovereignty headed by Mykola Shulha, the CPU Central Committee's new secretary for inter-ethnic relations, had spent the last few days preparing a revised draft of the declaration of state sovereignty which incorporated some of the changes and additions that deputies had proposed in their alternative variants and during the debate. It was, as he acknowledged, essentially a cross between the officially proposed draft and the variant which Tymchenko and Holovaty had submitted. Presenting the new 'working draft' to the deputies, Shulha pointed out that among the compromises which it embodied were the following: a change in the name of the document, so that it now read: 'On the state independence [sic] (sovereignty) of Ukraine'; the exclusion of the section on the new Union treaty; and the inclusion of a section on national

armed forces.¹ Clearly, while still not fully satisfying the opposition, the new draft had moved considerably closer to what it sought. On the other hand, the concessions infuriated some of the conservatives. Twenty-four hard-liners within Hurenko's bloc, most of whom were representatives of the security ministries, immediately announced the creation of their own group called 'Loyalty to the Homeland'; they attacked the working draft as amounting to a 'camouflaged exit from the Soviet Union'.²

The debate about the terms of the declaration of sovereignty was resumed and once again passions flared up. There was strong opposition, for instance, to the idea of Ukraine having its own armed forces, with one deputy asking what the fate of the Soviet Black Sea Fleet would be, considering that the Russian Federation, Ukraine and Georgia could all lay some claim to it. On the other hand, other deputies pointed to the growing opposition in the republic to the use of Ukrainian conscripts in the conflicts in the Transcaucasus and Central Asia. Numerous deputies from the opposition also expressed their frustration with the fact that the deputy chairman of the parliament, Plyushch, was not opening the discussion of the individual sections of the working draft and voting on them. He, in turn, argued that with so many deputies still absent in Moscow this would be premature.

The People's Council therefore went on the offensive. On Friday 6 July, Yemets proposed that in response to the miners' demands parliament adopt a decision requiring the Commission on Human Rights to draft a 'decree on political power', that is, on regulating the role of the CPU and other political parties, creating a commission to study the issues connected with the CPSU's property in Ukraine, and insisting that the new Ukrainian government (which Masol was still forming) include a committee on the coal industry, or, in other words, that Ukraine assert its control over the coal industry in the republic.

Later that day, while Plyushch was still stalling on Yemets' proposal Chornovil read out a statement on behalf of the People's Council in which the absent Communist deputies were accused of 'paralyzing the work' of parliament and 'blocking' the adoption of the declaration of state sovereignty. It was impermissible, the state-

Parliamentary Bulletin, no. 56.

² Radio Kyiv, 6 July 1990.

ment declared, that at a time of such political and social tension in the republic, the head of the parliament and the other Communist deputies were putting their 'narrow party interests' above 'the interests of the people of Ukraine'. It went on to call for the immediate recall of all Ukrainian deputies from Moscow. Holovaty twisted the knife even more by asking what kind of state sovereignty Ukraine could expect if the head of the parliament had not been present at any of the sessions at which the declaration had been debated, and what sort of role the CPU would seek to play in a sovereign Ukraine if its leader was telling the CPSU Congress in Moscow that 'tendencies that are dangerous for the CPSU have begun to appear in the workers' movement'.

Bowing to the pressure, Plyushch put the proposal to recall the Communist deputies to a vote: 291 deputies supported it, and 20 opposed it.³ Clearly, many of the Communist deputies who had remained in Kyiv had also had enough of the delays.

The following Monday, Plyushch opened proceedings by reading a statement from the CPU delegation at the CPSU Congress, signed by Hurenko and Kravchuk, protesting about the way in which the Ukrainian parliament had voted to recall the Communist deputies from Moscow. It claimed that Ukraine's Communists were in fact 'upholding the vital interests' of their republic at the Congress. This only drew more devastating criticism from Holovaty and others, who once again accused Ukraine's Communists of regarding the CPSU Congress as more important than the parliament of their republic and taking their orders from Moscow. With the mood in the parliament becoming angrier by the hour, Plyushch agreed to allow a vote on the proposal that the working draft be accepted as the basis of the declaration of sovereignty and that the document be sent for final clearance by the parliamentary commissions. The proposal was overwhelmingly supported.⁴

Plyushch, however, knew something that only perhaps Hurenko, Kravchuk and a few other leaders of the CPU were privy to — that a major scandal was brewing because Ivashko had decided to relinquish the chairmanship of the Ukrainian parliament and not to return at all. According to Kravchuk, who was dispatched to Kyiv with the task of informing the Communist deputies about this

³ *Parliamentary Bulletin*, no. 58.

⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 60.

unexpected development, Plyushch tried to persuade Ivashko to change his mind but failed.⁵ The reason for Ivashko's abrupt abandonment of his position in Kyiv was to emerge soon enough: as Kravchuk and Hurenko already knew, he had accepted an invitation from Gorbachev to become his deputy at the head of the foundering CPSU. On 11 July, a stunned parliament heard Plyushch read out a statement from Ivashko, apparently written two days earlier, in which he not only announced his resignation but also rather bitterly accused the deputies who had voted for his recall from Moscow, including, as he stressed, 'over 200 members of the Party', of having in effect expressed their lack of confidence in him. His case was not helped when, on that very same day in Moscow, he was elected to the new position of deputy general secretary of the CPSU: this news gave the closing words of his statement — 'I assure the Ukrainian people that I have done nothing to let it down' — an excruciatingly hollow ring.⁶

The Ukrainian deputies reacted with indignation: the national democrats depicted Ivashko as a Communist opportunist who had put his career before his people and its parliament, and most of the Communists who had elected him head of the parliament felt betrayed. Ivashko's 'desertion' left the Communist majority leaderless, embarrassed and in disarray. It upset the balance of forces in the parliament and provided the opposition with a wonderful opportunity to press forward.

Plyushch postponed discussion of Ivashko's decision and invited Shulha to read out the new working draft, which, as the latter acknowledged, had been hastily and only lightly revised the night before by the Commission on State Sovereignty. The document contained further concessions: it did not refer directly either to the USSR or a new Union treaty, and, while asserting the right of the Ukrainian nation to national self-determination, and the desire of the people of Ukraine to build a democratic society based on the rule of law in which the rights of all citizens and peoples would be guaranteed, it also stated, among other things, that the Ukrainian SSR had 'its own citizenship', control over immigration into the republic, an independent banking system, and 'its own armed forces and state security bodies, subordinated to the Supreme Council of

⁵ Chemerys, *Prezydent*, pp. 174-5.

⁶ *Parliamentary Bulletin*, no. 61.

the Ukrainian SSR'. In other words, it read as a virtual declaration of independence.

The conservative Communists were not about to give up without a fight and launched a battle over the very title of the document, insisting that the name Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic be used. The debate revealed, however, that the Communist majority had split. Only 151 deputies voted for using the name Ukrainian SSR in the title, while 173 voted against. A compromise title was supported by 250 deputies; it omitted the word independence and read: 'Declaration of the State Sovereignty of Ukraine.' Nevertheless, when Chornovil proposed that in the opening section the document proclaim that the name of the Ukrainian SSR was being changed to Republic of Ukraine, only 113 deputies supported him.⁷

Later that dramatic day, the demoralized Communist majority was given even more to think about: a resolution adopted by miners at their protest meeting in Donetsk was read out in the parliament in which they reiterated their call for the nationalization of the CPSU's property, an end to the Communist Party's control of the ministries and agencies responsible for defence, internal security and overseeing the economy, and for the Soviet Government to resign.⁸ Moreover, the evening's television news showed an abundance of blue and yellow flags at the miners' protests in the Donbas.⁹

The news from Moscow also reflected the general direction in which things were moving. At the CPSU Congress Gorbachev had eventually managed to come out on top and to push through a number of reforms in the new set of Party rules. Two of them were aimed at preventing any further splitting of the CPSU along national lines: although the principle of federalism was rejected, the republican Communist parties were given more autonomy and republican Party leaders were made ex-officio members of the Politburo. Overall, though, as Yeltsin put it, the Congress only 'papered over the cracks'. On 12 July, he, together with some members of the Democratic Platform, announced that he was leaving the CPSU, thereby highlighting the continuing decline of the Communist Party's power and influence.

For more and more Ukrainian Communists the choice was being

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 62.

⁹ Pavlychko, *Letters From Kiev*, pp. 50-1.

reduced to going with the flow for survival's sake, or continuing to battle against the inexorable current in a battered and leaking vessel. In view of all this, the debate on the individual sections of the working draft proceeded in a more businesslike manner. Although both sides continued to defend their positions, a more constructive spirit crept in, with Kravchuk, Shulha, Matviyenko and Plyushch from among the Communists setting the best example. In fact, in what appeared to be an exercise in damage containment and an attempt to regain some of the initiative, on 12 July Kravchuk read out a statement on behalf of the 'For a Soviet Socialist Ukraine' faction in which he called on deputies to remember that at this historic moment the fate of their republic's future and well-being was being decided and to put the interests of Ukraine before those of their political parties or personal ambitions. Warning of the dangers of growing social tensions and political confrontation in the republic, he appealed to the deputies, miners and the Ukrainian public generally to work together on the basis of moderation, mutual understanding, toleration and trust.¹⁰

The main sticking points during the remainder of the debate were whether citizens of Ukraine should have a single citizenship of the Ukrainian SSR or also remain citizens of the USSR, how the republic should safeguard its defence and security, and the new Union treaty. On the first issue, a compromise was eventually reached, thanks to Kravchuk, whereby citizens of Ukraine were also guaranteed the right to retain Soviet citizenship. The second question proved more difficult to resolve, but here too an agreement was successfully worked out, and it turned out to be more radical and far-reaching in its implications than could have been anticipated. After considerable debate, the principle promoted by the national democrats that a sovereign Ukraine should have the right to its own military and security forces was endorsed by a vote of 230 to 113. This, in fact, was the first challenge of this kind to Moscow in the military-security sphere from any of the non-Russian republics. The deputies also agreed that Ukrainian conscripts should not serve outside the republic without the permission of the Ukrainian parliament. But there was an even greater surprise. During the debate, Drach added another proposal which reflected both the anti-nuclear sentiment in the republic which the Chornobyl disaster

had produced and the fact that nuclear weapons and the estimated 1 million or so Soviet troops deployed on Ukraine's territory were associated with Moscow's military and imperial might and that Kyiv had no say in the matter. It entailed Ukraine proclaiming its intention 'to become a neutral state that does not participate in military blocs and that adheres to the three non-nuclear principles: not to maintain, produce or acquire nuclear weapons'. This precept was supported by 238 of the deputies, with 100 voting against.

Towards the end of the debate and voting on the individual sections, which was concluded remarkably quickly in just three days on the evening of 13 July, the conservative Communist forces managed to ensure that a reference to the new Union treaty would be included in the declaration after all. They successfully insisted that the following sentence was added to the final section dealing with international relations: "The principles of the Declaration of the Sovereignty of Ukraine are used for concluding a Union treaty.' Even so, the official transcripts of the proceedings record an unidentified deputy as attempting to call his Communist colleagues to their senses by accusing them of voting 'for the secession of Ukraine from the Soviet Union', and proposing sarcastically that the title of the document be changed to 'Declaration on Secession from the Union'.¹¹

Although a vote could have been taken that Friday evening, Plyushch decided to wait for the weekend before asking the Ukrainian parliament to make its historic decision. On Sunday, the democratic forces held a huge demonstration in Kyiv at which calls were made for protests and civil disobedience if the Verkhovna Rada delayed declaring Ukraine's state sovereignty. The following morning, on 16 July, the moment of truth arrived and the overwhelming support which the declaration of sovereignty received astounded even the optimists: 355 deputies voted for the declaration, four against, and one abstained.¹² After decades of being submerged, Ukraine had finally regained its voice and reasserted its desire to be recognized as a state in its own right.

The deputy was identified elsewhere as Oleksandr Bandurka from Kharkiv. *Holos*, no. 13 (24), 22 July 1990. For details of the debate, see *Parliamentary Bulletin*, nos 61-6.

" *Parliamentary Bulletin*, no. 67.

The adoption of the Declaration was greeted with jubilation and the parliament further underscored the significance of its decision by voting that henceforth 16 July would be observed as a state holiday. For the moment, democrats and Communists united in celebrating what was after all one of the most important events and turning points in Ukrainian history. For the patriotic forces, however, the Declaration represented the first major step towards independence, while for the CPU leadership the document was a means for holding on to power while broadening Ukraine's autonomy within a revamped Soviet system. Nevertheless, the symbolic and psychological value of the document seemed to more than compensate for the flaws and compromises which it contained. The Declaration boosted national dignity and pride, strengthened the sense of a broader Ukrainian republican identity and citizenship and, while signalling a decisive break with the imperial and authoritarian past, also opened the way forward to a more promising future, however interpreted. In the Ukrainian capital, for example, the Kyiv City Council voted on 20 July to raise the blue and yellow flag outside the city hall, and four days later tens of thousands of people gathered to witness and celebrate the event.¹³

With official Moscow, preoccupied with the outbreak of further inter-ethnic violence in the Transcaucasus and Central Asia, muting its reaction, the immediate effect of the Declaration remained unclear. Ukraine was still part of the Soviet Union, albeit an enfeebled one, and, despite their rhetoric, even the most radical of Ukrainian politicians recognized that the realization of Ukraine's sovereignty would be a gradual and complex process. In many respects, therefore, the Declaration was an idealistic statement of intention, which for the time being, at least, seemed more a case of wishful thinking than a blueprint for Ukraine's attainment of independence. Here, perhaps, also lies the key to understanding the behaviour of the conservative Communists who voted for the Declaration. As Shulha had reminded the deputies during the debate on the section dealing with republican citizenship, the document was only a declaration and did not have the force of law.¹⁴ What

¹³ See the report and photographs in *Molod Ukrainy*, 26 July 1990, and *Kultura i zhyttva*, 29 July 1990.

¹⁴ Rather courageously, Chornovil was later to acknowledge in an interview: 'We proclaimed sovereignty - it's very moving: we cried, we embraced one another,

was needed, then, was a whole series of new laws and a new constitution which would permit the principles enshrined in the Declaration to be translated into practice.

More progress amid renewed confrontation

Once emotions in the parliament had subsided, Pavlychko sought on behalf of the opposition to ascertain how the republic's leadership intended to proceed concerning the new Union treaty. According to Radio Kyiv, the general feeling among the deputies seemed to be that until a new Ukrainian constitution was drafted 'such a treaty was premature'.¹⁵

Political realities, however, once again soon soured the atmosphere. Many members of the opposition hoped that the parliament would now be able to adopt a decree on power which would formally end the CPU's privileged role and thereby bring Ukraine's political life into step with the times. Instead, the next items of business were the structure of the new Ukrainian government and the election of a successor to Ivashko. In other words, without having reviewed and adjusted the existing political system to reflect the profound changes that had taken place, the deputies were called on to approve an essentially conservative proposal from Masol to establish government structures which more or less followed the old cumbersome Soviet model and to choose, in conditions when the CPU's leading role was still enshrined in the republic's constitution, who would lead the new sovereign but still formally Soviet and Socialist Ukrainian state.

Masol's proposals came under heavy fire and were accepted only after he himself agreed with much of the criticism and assured deputies that the new governmental structures would be only temporary to cover a 'transitional period'.¹⁶ When it came to filling the vacant post of the chairman of the parliament, no less than twenty-seven candidates, including among others from the Communist camp Hurenko, Kravchuk, Plyushch and Mykola Fomenko, the head of the parliament's secretariat, were proposed. Most simply took advantage of the opportunity to deliver programmatic speeches

but everyone knew that these were just words.' *Literatuma Ukraina*, 4 October 1990.

¹⁵ Radio Kyiv, 18 July 1990.

¹⁶ *Radyanska Ukraina*, 18 and 20 July 1990.

before withdrawing their candidacies. The Union treaty was the dominant theme, with the Communist representatives defending the idea, and the opposition's spokesmen opposing it. Khmara, Larysa Skoryk, Holovaty, Yemets, Ivan Zayets and other representatives of the opposition also called for the prompt adoption of a decree on power. Eventually, two main contenders were left — Yukhnovsky from the People's Council, and Kravchuk from the CPU. The first round of voting produced no outright winner, but the 224 votes which Kravchuk secured, as compared with the 140 which Yukhnovsky obtained, indicated that the old division between the Communist majority and the opposition remained and that no upset could be expected. Yukhnovsky withdrew from the race and many of the People's Council boycotted the second ballot. On 23 July, Kravchuk easily defeated the remaining candidate, Boris Mokin, obtaining the now symbolic number of 239 votes.

Although Kravchuk called on the parliament to put confrontation behind it and usher in a period of constructive work, his affirmation in his speeches of the Soviet system and of Ukraine's 'Socialist choice', as well as his support for a new Union treaty, left the opposition convinced that the CPU's most capable politician would continue to put his party's interests first. Responding on behalf of the People's Council, Pavlychko declared that in the circumstances the democratic bloc would continue to regard itself as an opposition and that it would take no responsibility for the actions of the new head of the parliament.¹⁷

Under Kravchuk's new stewardship the debate on the adoption of a decree on power continued to be avoided. The new head of the parliament told a press conference after his election that he doubted whether deputies would manage to agree on such a document before the closure of the current session. He also revealed why by going on to insist that any documents of such major significance, including a new republican constitution, would have to recognize three key factors: 'that Ukraine is a democratic state, that Ukraine is a Soviet state, and that Ukraine is a Socialist state.'¹⁸ He remained just as categorical on the question of the Union treaty. When asked soon afterwards by a visiting Bavarian parliamentary delegation whether Ukraine's Declaration of Sovereignty would

¹⁷ Radio Kyiv, 23 July 1990.

Radyanska Ukraina, 26 July 1990.

lead to 'the destruction of the Soviet Union', Kravchuk told journalists he had replied 'No. Because our position is one of support for the Union treaty and we consider that it is necessary.'¹⁹

Despite the new tensions, the parliament did manage to make several important decisions during what turned out to be the final days of the current session. On 30 July, it defied the Gorbachev leadership and the Soviet top brass by voting to recall all Ukrainians serving in the Soviet security forces in areas of conflict in other parts of the USSR. An elated Drach told Reuter that he saw this as the first step towards the creation of a Ukrainian army.²⁰ Two days later, the parliament passed a bill calling on the Ukrainian government to work out a new energy programme which would entail the closure of the Chornobyl power station and the reduction of the use of nuclear power altogether. Declaring the whole republic an ecological disaster zone because of the 1986 Chornobyl nuclear accident, it also proposed a programme of additional urgent measures to deal with the after-effects of the disaster, including the evacuation of more people from areas contaminated by nuclear radiation. A government committee on Chornobyl was to be set up and a first deputy prime minister with specific responsibility for Chornobyl issues appointed. Responding to the continuing public opposition to the nuclear energy industry and ecological sensitivities, the parliament also decided to impose a moratorium on the construction of both new nuclear power stations and military radar stations in the republic.²¹

The Verkhovna Rada's attention then shifted to bolstering the Declaration of State Sovereignty with a law on the republic's economic sovereignty. The draft proposed by the government and introduced on its behalf by the newly appointed deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers and head of the State Committee on the Economy, Fokin, had been in preparation for a long time. Specialists from different regions had worked on it and no less than twelve alternative variants had been taken into account. For all its importance, though, the document was short on details and barely elaborated the principles which had been enshrined in the Declaration: in fact, it itself had a declarative ring to it. After a relatively

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 27 July 1990.

²⁰ Reuter, 30 July 1990.

²¹ Reuter, 1 August 1990, and Radio Kyiv, 1 and 2 August 1990.

brief debate, the draft was endorsed and on 3 August the parliament passed the 'Law on the Economic Independence of the Ukrainian SSR'. It was hailed as another triumph for the reformers for it not only asserted Ukraine's sovereignty in the economic sphere — how this was to be implemented was practically left unsaid—but also appeared to set Ukraine on a gradual course towards market relations, albeit in the form of a 'regulated market economy'.²²

This was to be the last achievement of the first session of the new parliament for that same day agreement once again gave way to confrontation between the Communist majority and the democratic opposition. The atmosphere was inflamed by exchanges over the dismantling of monuments of Lenin that had begun in Western Ukraine. As a result, the Communist majority rejected the selection of Zhulynsky (who, incidentally, had not left the Communist Party) for the post of minister of culture even though he was the only well-known representative from the democratic camp nominated to serve in the new government.

After this, Kravchuk appears to have miscalculated by unexpectedly proposing the formation of a commission packed with Communist regional Party bosses to prepare a draft of a new republican constitution. The opposition greeted this transparent move to secure a political advantage for the Communists with scorn and the proposal had to be shelved. On this discordant note, Kravchuk formally closed the session.

Seeking to gloss over the new impasse, Kravchuk emphasized that, despite the 'complex conditions' which had characterized its work, the first session of the new parliament had succeeded in adopting close to 150 legislative acts and resolutions, including the Declaration of the State Sovereignty of Ukraine and the law on economic independence, and that the most constructive period had been during the last three weeks.²³ Representatives of the opposition also acknowledged, as Chornovil put it, that considering the make-up of the parliament, it had been possible to pass a number of essential laws, not to mention adopt the Declaration, which in the circumstances had been 'one of the wonders of the twentieth century'.²⁴

²² *Radyanska Ukraina*, 4 August 1990. For the text of the law, see *Radyanska Ukraina*, 8 August 1990.

²³ *Ibid.*, 5 August 1990.

²⁴ Radio Kyiv, 10 August 1990.

For its part, the People's Council issued a protest in the form of an appeal addressed to the deputies and the citizens of Ukraine. It pointed out that the session had been closed before the agenda had been completed and before numerous important issues, such as the decree on power, the preparation of a new constitution, the transition to market relations and inauguration of new economic relations with the other republics had been dealt with. It also warned that agitation for the new Union treaty was also being stepped up 'in the corridors' of both the Ukrainian and the Soviet parliaments. The opposition therefore proposed that the summer recess be shortened, that parliament resume its work by 3 September, and that in the meantime work on preparing new legislation be continued by the parliamentary commissions.²⁵

While both camps took advantage of the summer break to review the situation and prepare for what was promising to be perhaps an even more difficult second session of the parliament, there were a number of brighter notes that helped raise spirits. During the first week of August, hundreds of thousands of people from all over Ukraine participated in the Days of Cossack Glory in the Zaporizhzhya and Dnipropetrovsk regions. The festival, which was attended by Kravchuk and Plyushch, was a great success and for a few days it seemed to unite the Ukrainian nation in a celebration of its identity and traditions.²⁶ Later that month, Kyiv hosted the first gathering of its leading scholars from both inside Ukraine and the diaspora. The First Congress of the International Association of Ukrainianists symbolized the breaking down of the barriers that had artificially separated Ukrainians from one another for so long and the irrepressible spirit that had sustained Ukrainian scholarship through persecution and exile. Ukrainian television viewers were also shown the state choir of Ukraine 'Veriovka' performing a specially orchestrated version of the long-banned Ukrainian national anthem at the gala concert in Kyiv's opera house for the participants of the congress. Furthermore, the republican media presented interviews with many of the guests from the diaspora who until only recently had been officially labelled as enemies.²⁷

There were also encouraging developments connected with

²⁵ *Literaturna Ukraina*, 16 August 1990.

²⁶ See *ibid.*, 9 and 16 August 1990.

²⁷ The author was present at the Congress.

Ukraine's foreign relations. Eleven representatives of the People's Council, including Rukh's leader, Drach, and the URP's leader, Lukyanenko, met in Moscow on 29 August with members of the 'Democratic Russia' parliamentary bloc and broke new ground. They signed a 'Declaration on the Principles of Inter-state Relations between Ukraine and the RSFSR based on the Declarations of State Sovereignty', which asserted that the Ukrainian and Russian peoples now finally had 'a real chance to open a new chapter in the history of their relations'. Describing the Soviet Union as a 'unitary empire' which was experiencing 'a deep systemic crisis', the signatories declared that the democratic forces in both Russia and Ukraine were committed to 'building democratic independent states' and establishing harmonious bilateral relations between them based on the recognition of the principles affirmed in their respective declarations of sovereignty. They were: the unconditional recognition of one another as subjects of international law; 'the sovereign equality' of both states; 'non-interference in each other's internal affairs and the renunciation of the use of force or economic and other forms of pressure'; the inviolability of existing state borders between the Ukrainian SSR and the RSFSR and the renunciation of any territorial claims; the safeguarding of the political, economic, ethnic and cultural rights of Russians living in Ukraine and vice versa; the desirability of mutually beneficial cooperation in various fields; and the regulation of disputes in the spirit of friendship. The Declaration went on to describe 'the careful dismantling' of the Union structures, 'assertion of the statehood of the republics and transition to a commonwealth of independent states' as 'the main problem of the present period'. The eleven Russian signatories included three members of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR - Sergei Kovalev, Sergei Shakhrai and Vladimir Lukin - as well as the historian Afanasev.²⁸

On the official level, too, there were the first signs that Ukraine did indeed intend to formulate and pursue an independent foreign policy. This was the main message of a press conference given on 2 August by the newly appointed Ukrainian foreign minister, Anatolii Zlenko, and the chairman of the parliamentary foreign relations commission, Pavlychko. They explained that the initial focus would be on establishing direct ties with 'immediate neighbours' and

²⁸ The text was published in *Literatuma Ukraina*, 6 September 1990.

developing links with states which had large Ukrainian communities, such as the USA and Canada. Clearly, Ukraine's first priority was to secure recognition of its sovereignty, borders and territorial integrity from its neighbours and from the international community generally and to ensure that its links with the large Ukrainian diaspora remained open. Pavlychko also indicated that in the next stage, Ukraine would seek to participate 'directly' and as 'an equal partner' in the 'European process', in other words, that sovereign Ukraine was seeking recognition as a European state and that it wanted to participate independently in European forums and structures.²⁹

Hungary proved to be an understanding and supportive neighbour and took the lead in facilitating Ukraine's new opening up to its neighbours and Europe. A Hungarian invitation to Zlenko to pay an official visit to Budapest provided Ukraine with the first opportunity to test its newly declared sovereignty in the area of foreign relations. The visit, on 24 August, was crowned by Hungarian President Arpad Goncz's acceptance of an invitation to visit Kyiv and Ukraine's Transcarpathian region, where some 150,000 Hungarians live. On 27 September, he became the first foreign head of state to visit Kyiv since Ukraine's Declaration of Sovereignty. During his stay in Kyiv, both sides agreed to a major upgrading of bilateral relations, to work towards the establishment of full diplomatic relations in coordination with Moscow and to formalize their respect for the rights of national minorities.³⁰

As for the Union treaty, the evolution of Kravchuk's views on this highly sensitive issue was also noteworthy, though at the time the significance of this may not have been readily appreciated. After attending a joint meeting in Moscow in early September of the Presidential Council and the Federation Council at which the Union treaty was discussed, Kravchuk revealed in an interview for Ukrainian television that there had been 'sharp' and 'uncompromising' exchanges and that the representatives of the republics had rejected a draft prepared by the Soviet government which sought to preserve the status quo. Asked to elaborate his own

Ibid., 9 August 1990. See also John A. Marcum, 'The New Ukraine: Changes of Flags in Kyiv', *Christian Science Monitor*, 28 September 1990.

" ' See Alfred Reisch, 'Hungary and Ukraine Agree to Upgrade Bilateral Relations', *Report on Eastern Europe*, vol. 44 (2 November 1990), pp. 6-12.

position on the question, Kravchuk declared that the existing 'unitary state' should be replaced by 'a Union of free, independent, sovereign, socialist, states-republics', and that the sovereign republics themselves, not the centre, should be responsible for the process of creating the new entity. In the interview, Kravchuk also sought to assure his critics in the national democratic camp that he recognized that Ukraine had made its choice to embark 'on the road to sovereignty, on the road to independence' and that he was not doing anything 'behind the back' of deputies to undermine this decision.³¹ Such statements, of course, did not help his image among the hard-liners within the CPU.

During the last part of September, though, the issue of the Union treaty was temporarily overshadowed by a new controversy which forced Russians and non-Russians alike to think even harder about their relations and how they saw their future. It was generated by the publication in the Soviet press of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's essay 'How Shall We Reconstitute Russia?' in which he advocated the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the creation of a 'Russian Union', or greater Russia, which would incorporate Ukraine, Belarus and northern Kazakhstan. The essay caused outrage in all three-republics and in the capital of Kazakhstan there were even demonstrations against the Russian writer. Oliinyk, who had since been appointed deputy head of the Council of Nationalities and was regarded by many of his former Ukrainian colleagues as having 'sold out' to Gorbachev and 'the centre', declared in the Soviet parliament on 25 September that Solzhenitsyn had insulted the Ukrainians and other peoples and had fanned anti-Russian feeling. When pressed in the parliament by a deputy from Kazakhstan to state his view on the matter, Gorbachev was forced to acknowledge that the essay was inflammatory and to distance himself from it.³²

The Ukrainian October near-revolution

With the opposition feeling itself blocked in the parliament, lacking representation in Masol's essentially Communist government, and

³¹ *Raciyanska Ukraina*, 12 September 1990.

³² Soviet television, 25 September 1990. The text of Oliinyk's speech, together with a rejoinder to Solzhenitsyn from the historian Raisa Ivanchenko, were published in *Literatuma Ukraina*, 11 October 1990.

fearing that the CPU's leaders would exploit the Declaration of Sovereignty as 'a scrap of paper' to be used for their own political ends, the stage was set for an intensification of the political struggle outside of parliament and an escalation of tensions. As before, the anti-Communist forces recognized that the only way in which they could weaken the Communist hold on the levers of power was through united action and the mobilization of mass support. Their leaders had seen how effective worker protests and strike committees could be, and were also well aware that the deteriorating economic conditions and shortages of staples in the shops were continuing to fuel social discontent. If in Western Ukraine nationalism was still the driving force, in Eastern Ukraine social and economic factors had galvanized the miners and other workers. Political activity and defiance in both parts of the republic was directed against the Communist Party and Moscow, and expressed in support for maximal sovereignty and, increasingly, independence. The resulting continuing radicalization and polarization of politics could also be seen in the evolution of both Rukh and the various workers' strike committees. Thus, the situation was seen by some of the more militant leaders of the opposition's forces as ripe for a decisive push.

Both sides busied themselves preparing for the next session of parliament, which it had since been decided to convene on 1 October. Seeking to pre-empt the opposition, the CPU made the first move through its control of the Presidium of the legislature. On 11 September, the Presidium, chaired by Kravchuk, met to prepare a provisional agenda for the next session. There was no mention of the decree on power and instead the Presidium seemed to be more concerned in trying to pressure numerous city councils, mainly in Western Ukraine, to reverse their decisions to allow the removal of statues of Lenin. But what angered the opposition the most was the decision of the Presidium to impose a ban on demonstrations and public meetings within a one kilometre radius of the parliament building.³³

The People's Council protested against this 'crude violation of the democratic rights of citizens' and urged the public to demonstrate outside the parliament on the first day of the new session.³⁴ This appeal appeared to be reinforced when on 15 Sep-

³³ *Radyanska Ukraina*, 13 September 1990.

tember representatives of strike committees from all over Ukraine decided to call a one-day warning strike on 1 October. In fact, it was to transpire that the more moderate elements within Rukh's leadership were not convinced that strikes at a time of growing economic difficulties were the most appropriate form of political struggle. Likewise, in Western Ukraine, it seemed to make little sense to hold strikes when in fact the first ones to feel the damage would be the democratic authorities.

The Kyiv branch of the Ukrainian Students' Union went further and announced that its members would pitch tents on Kyiv's central October Revolution Square — the opposition had renamed it Independence Square — and start a hunger strike. The students' demands included the nationalization of the CPU's and Komsomol's property and the calling of new parliamentary elections in the spring of 1991.³⁵

On 28 September, the CPU Central Committee held a plenum at which Hurenko left no doubt as to how the CPU's leadership interpreted what was happening. He claimed that the opposition had thrown off its 'camouflage' and was seeking to take power by unconstitutional means, including violent ones. This, he argued, was what was behind the mass anti-Communist protests and campaign of civil disobedience which had been planned to coincide with the opening of the next session of the parliament. Significantly, he also referred to 'emissaries' from the Democratic Russia bloc, which he said had also been 'stirring up' things in the republic.³⁶ At this plenum, Kravchuk wisely relinquished his post as second secretary of the CPU.

On the eve of the protests, the Presidium of the parliament issued an appeal addressed to the citizens of the republic which called for political moderation and unity in the cause of the practical realization of the Declaration of State Sovereignty. Referring to the serious economic and social problems in Ukraine, and growing political unrest, 'disregard for laws', and efforts 'to resolve political problems by unconstitutional means', the Presidium described the situation as 'alarming and dangerous'. It acknowledged that there was widespread dissatisfaction with the slowness in which the Declara-

" *Literatuma Ukraina*, 27 September 1990.

³⁵ Haran, *To Kill the Dragon*, p. 125.

' ' *Radyanska Ukraina*, 30 September 1990.

tion of Sovereignty was being implemented and falling living standards, and it sought to assure the public that it was doing, and would continue to do, its best to 'stabilize the political and economic situation . . . [and] build a sovereign Ukrainian state based on the rule of law'. Signalling an important concession designed to reduce tensions, the Presidium also announced in the appeal that it had decided that it would be 'premature' for the republic to sign a new Union treaty before a new Ukrainian constitution had been adopted.

On the other hand, the Presidium also emphasized that it had instructed the security forces to ensure that law and order were maintained.³⁷ The head of the Kyiv City Administration of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, General Valentyn Nedryhailo, who was responsible for the capital's police force, also appeared on television and announced that a demonstration called by the opposition for Sunday, 30 September, had been authorized by the city council, but that the protest planned for 1 October outside the parliament building had not been permitted. Nervousness gripped the capital as rumours spread about military vehicles being stationed on the outskirts of the city.

All the same, on 30 September, over 100,000 people demonstrated in Kyiv in what was the largest protest yet seen in the Ukrainian capital. Its stated purpose was to oppose the Union treaty and express support for independence, but leaders of the opposition forces also used the occasion to issue an appeal calling on all of the republic's political parties and associations to take part in a 'round-table' with representatives from industry, agriculture, science and learning to find ways out of Ukraine's crisis and to set up a government of national salvation. After a public meeting, the protesters marched through the centre of the capital, many of them demanding the resignation of Kravchuk and Masol, and some calling for the parliament to be dissolved and for new elections.³⁸

The same slogans were heard the following day when tens of thousands defied the Presidium's ban and gathered to demonstrate outside the parliament. The authorities decided not to risk aggravating the situation by attempting to prevent the protest. Instead, the

³⁷ *Radyanska Ukmyna*, 28 September 1990.

Pavlychko, *Letters from Kiev*, pp. 75-9. The appeal, which was endorsed by the public meeting, was published in *Literatuma Ukmyna*, 4 October 1990.

demonstrators were kept some distance away from the parliament by a strong police cordon.

The tensions outside the parliament were reflected inside the chamber. The second session opened with scuffles after some of the more radical members of the opposition attempted to bring a large blue and yellow flag on their shoulders into the chamber. Kravchuk subsequently did not help matters by stating that there could not be any 'consolidation' between the majority and the opposition in the parliament, only 'compromises', and by calling on the deputies to endorse the Presidium's ban on protests near the building, which the majority promptly did. The atmosphere was further aggravated when Konev, now also representing a newly created Association of Democratic Councils of Ukraine, and Tanyuk the People's Council, delivered statements calling for, among other things, the resignation of Masol and Kravchuk. The Communist majority, however, simply blocked their demand.³⁴

By the evening it became apparent that the strike action throughout the republic had not been particularly successful and this allowed the central Soviet media to announce that the attempt to organize a Ukrainian general strike had failed.⁴⁰ Chornovil was later even to describe it as having been 'a major political blunder' and a setback for the opposition.⁴¹ Certainly, though impressive, the protest actions had not been as massive and effective as the opposition had hoped and failed to alter the political balance.

What was to save the day for the opposition and eventually to break the political deadlock, though, was the students' hunger strike. It began on 2 October and unexpectedly was to provide a new impetus to the opposition's faltering protest campaign. The students, having created a mini-Tiananmen Square in the heart of Kyiv, put forward five basic demands: the resignation of Masol, a law stipulating that Ukrainians do their military service only on the territory of the republic, rejection of the idea of a new Union treaty, nationalization of the CPU's property and the holding of new elections to the parliament on a multi-party basis. That same day, the first clashes between protesters and the police took place and, with additional

³⁴ Radio Kyiv, 1 October 1990, and Haran, *To Kill the Dragon*, pp. 128-9.

⁴⁰ TASS, 1 October 1990.

⁴¹ He gave this assessment later in the month at Rukh's Second Congress. See *Sudiasnist*, January 1991, p. 44.

units of riot police being brought in to strengthen the cordon around the parliament, the situation grew more and more volatile.⁴²

In the parliament, the atmosphere remained strained but the session was at least able to begin its work. Among its first decisions was to reject the government's proposals for stabilizing the economic situation in the republic, which only served to undermine Masol's position even more. A delegation was also sent to meet with the student hunger-strikers and Yemets managed to persuade the deputies to set up a commission to examine the violent incidents outside the parliament building. As for foreign relations, the parliament endorsed a statement read out by Pavlychko welcoming the reunification of Germany and expressing Kyiv's desire for closer bilateral ties with Bonn. Also, as Radio Moscow reported on 8 October, Kravchuk received a parliamentary delegation from the Russian Federation to discuss the establishment of a bilateral parliamentary commission to promote ties between the neighbouring sovereign republics.

Nevertheless, when, on 8 October, it came to the crucial issues of giving the Declaration of State Sovereignty constitutional force, and of removing Article 6 on the leading role of the Party from the Ukrainian Constitution, the proposals failed to pass. The sense of renewed deadlock was reinforced during the next day when the majority seemed to backtrack on the parliament's earlier decision that Ukrainian soldiers should perform their military service on the territory of their republic, and decided that a special delegation should be sent to discuss the question in Moscow. Indignant and disheartened, representatives from the opposition were left declaring that all this was proof that the Communist majority indeed viewed the Declaration of the State Sovereignty as merely a scrap of paper. As one of them, Yevhen Hryniv from Lviv, told Radio Kyiv, the very deputies who had voted for the Declaration were now 'not keeping either to the letter or the spirit of this document'. On top of this, on 10 October, when the students were nine days into their hunger strike, the majority once again blocked a vote on confidence in Masol's government.⁴³

During the first half of October, however, the students' protest had gradually begun to capture the attention of the entire republic

⁴² Pavlychko, *Letters from Kiev*, pp. 82-3.

⁴³ Radio Kyiv, 3, 8, 9 and 10 October 1990.

and was now drawing support from students in other cities and radical deputies, eight of whom joined the hunger strike on 10 October. Oles Honchar had announced that he was leaving the Communist Party because of the 'behaviour of the group of 239' and especially their reaction to the students' hunger strike. There was also considerable support for the students from other cultural figures and from the democrats among the members of the Kyiv City Council. Furthermore, General Nedryhailo also demonstrated considerable understanding and professionalism: he met with the student hunger-strikers early on and sought to reassure them that they too would be protected by the police against any possible 'provocations' or heavy-handed attempts to disperse them.

After a large demonstration on 10 October outside the republican television centre, the deputies who had joined the students' protest were allowed to read their statements on the air. Two days later, students throughout the republic held a strike and thousands of them demonstrated in Kyiv in support of their colleagues. The protests continued. Every day in the capital thousands of people turned out to demonstrate in support of the students' demands and the militia sought to keep the protesters from breaking through to the parliament. With hard-line deputies calling for tough measures to 'restore order', tension grew and the threat of the imposition of a state of emergency hung in the air. On 16 October, there was another huge student demonstration in Kyiv. One of the students' leaders, Oles Donii, was invited by the opposition to address the parliament and that evening he and his colleagues were also allowed to present their case on television. They called on students throughout the republic to occupy their places of learning and to begin an indefinite strike. That same evening some of the students protesters in Kyiv moved their tents to almost outside the parliament building, while others occupied the main building of Kyiv University and raised a blue and yellow flag over it.

The situation had become extremely perilous, and the danger of a clash or provocation leading to bloodshed, and perhaps a general crackdown by the security forces, seemed greater than ever. Moderates on both sides worked to get reason and moderation to prevail but the hard-liners on both sides remained set against any compromises. On the one hand, radical leaders of the opposition such as Khmara urged the students not to budge on anything and even to go as far as demanding the dissolution of the CPU, while

conservative Communist deputies, as for example Vitalii Reva from Crimea, called for the imposition of a state of emergency in the capital and for the protesters to be dispersed by force. What was particularly discouraging for the Communist hard-liners was that all this time, while the more official Soviet central media increasingly depicted the events in Ukraine as nationalism run wild and the students as 'extremists' who were being manipulated by 'political adventurers', the Gorbachev leadership, preoccupied with 'the war of laws' between the centre and the sovereign Union republics, the declarations of sovereignty which were now also being made by autonomous republics within the Russian Federation, and trying to secure support for its compromise economic reform programme, did not intervene.

With the Communist majority beginning to waver, and the opposition threatening to walk out, the parliament decided to establish a bipartisan conciliatory committee headed by Plyushch to seek a solution to the crisis. On Wednesday 17 October, shortly after many workers from the huge and traditionally pro-Communist 'Arsenal' factory in Kyiv had come out in support of the students, the Communist authorities finally yielded. After more than two weeks of confrontation, the parliament agreed, on the recommendation of the conciliatory committee, to accept the students' demands. Masol was sacrificed.⁴⁴ It was also agreed that a referendum would be held on public confidence in the parliament which could pave the way for new elections; that a commission would be set up to discuss nationalization of the Party's and Komsomol's property; that Ukrainian citizens would not be made to serve outside their republic; and that Ukraine would not sign the Union treaty before a new republican constitution had been adopted.⁴⁵

There was a general sigh of relief in the republic for the near-revolutionary situation had been the closest that Ukraine had come to large-scale political violence and even civil war breaking out. For the more moderately minded politicians it had underscored the need

⁴ Kravchuk later revealed that Masol was removed by a decision of the CPU Central Committee after the decision was first agreed with Gorbachev and Ryzhkov. *Radio Ukraine*, 7 July 1994.

⁴⁵ On the student protests, see *Litemtuma Ukraina*, 11 and 18 October 1990; *Ukraina*, no. 48, 2 December 1990, pp. 1-3; and Haran, *To Kill the Dragon*, pp. 129-30, 132-5. The atmosphere in these fateful days is conveyed in Pavlychko, *Letters from Kiev*, pp. 79-96.

for a greater sense of responsibility, gradualism, compromise and cooperation rather than confrontation. But for the hard-liners on both sides, the students' victory had not resolved the fundamental issues and the political struggle had still to be decided.

While the students and their supporters were celebrating, the CPU's Politburo met to discuss the crisis in which the Party found itself. The records of the closed meeting show that Hurenko openly admitted that the CPU had lost an important battle and that it would have been wiser to reach a compromise with the student protesters before they had managed to mobilize mass public support. He expressed concern that there were increasing signs of 'nervousness', 'uncertainty' and internal discord within the ranks of the CPU. Defending Kravchuk, he called on his colleagues to 'cease this total distrust' of the head of the parliament. 'We put him there', he reminded them, 'so let's support him'. He agreed though that Plyushch 'was pushing against us', but cautioned against trying to vote him out of his position as deputy head of the parliament.

Kravchuk's comments at this meeting reveal him as the crafty politician that he was, and the way his mind worked. He advised his colleagues to allow someone not identified with the CPU leadership, even Yukhnovsky or some other representative of the opposition, to take responsibility for the government. The transition to market relations would be unpopular, he argued, there would be unemployment and living standards would continue to fall, and of course the reputation of whoever was trying to deal with these problems would suffer. Did the CPU want to risk taking all the blame by placing a leading Communist at the head of the government again, who in any case would be immediately confronted with mass protests? In traditional style, the Politburo decided to respond to the challenge from the increasingly militant national democratic forces by calling for a closing of ranks and a tightening of discipline within the Communist caucus in the parliament.⁴⁶

Within the next few days, the Communist majority in the parliament, while still resisting calls to give the Declaration of State Sovereignty the status of a constitutional law, finally agreed to make a number of key changes to the existing republican constitution. The most important of these was the removal of Article 6, though this had more symbolic significance than anything else, for the

¹ Lytvyn, *Political Arena*, pp. 249-55.

USSR Supreme Soviet had already passed a law on 9 October granting equal status to all political parties, and recognition of the supremacy of the republican legislation on the territory of Ukraine. The latter change happened to coincide with a law passed by the USSR Supreme Soviet, also on 24 October, reasserting the primacy of all-Union laws over republican ones. Because neither the centre nor the republics were able to win the continuing 'war of laws', such decisions had a symbolic value rather than anything else. Other noteworthy changes were: the republic's General Procurator was to be appointed by, and be responsible to, the Ukrainian parliament; that military service performed by Ukrainian citizens was to be regulated by the Ukrainian parliament; and a compromise decision requiring judges to suspend their membership in a political party or movement while they were in office.⁴⁷

Inspired by the victory over the CPU which the opposition thought had cleared the way for movement forward, Rukh decided at its Second Congress, held in Kyiv on 25-8 October, to come out unequivocally for independence and step up its struggle against the CPU. Drach delivered one of the best speeches in his life and was re-elected head of the movement; Mykhailo Horyn was chosen as his deputy. Kravchuk did not attend the Congress, but his deputy Plyushch did, and he endeared himself to the delegates by declaring his support for a 'sovereign and independent' Ukraine and urging Rukh to act as a 'consolidating centre for democratic forces'.

Quite a few of the speakers, however, were candid about the real state of things, about how much still needed to be done, and they sought to dispel any sense of complacency. Lukyanenko, for example, who had advocated moderation during the student protests, reminded delegates that even if the demonstrators had stormed the police lines, they would probably have been shot and the troops waiting on the outskirts of Kyiv brought in to ensure 'the triumph of reaction'. Assuming the protesters had even won in the capital, he asked, could they really have relied on support from the rest of the republic. He thought not, because, in his view, Rukh, and the URP for that matter, still needed time to broaden their support, especially in the south and east of Ukraine, and in the villages. In order to become sufficiently strong to dislodge the 'partocracy', which he described as the rule of the Party administrative apparatus

⁴⁷ Radio Kyiv, 24 October 1990, and Haran *To Kill the Dragon*, p. 136.

in alliance with the army and security forces, Rukh and its partners had to avoid a situation where force could be used against them.

Chornovil was more critical about the way in which Rukh's organization and activities were developing and he advocated a more resolute strategy aimed at achieving political power by peaceful means and state-building. He supported campaigning for the dissolution of the parliament and for new elections and the idea of a popularly elected president of the republic; he also reiterated his views on the need for some sort of a federal set-up in Ukraine to neutralize separatist tendencies, such as in Crimea, where the Communist-dominated regional council had stepped up its pressure for the restoration of the peninsula's autonomous status. Prophetically, as it later transpired, Chornovil also warned that the opposition needed to be prepared for a possible 'counter-revolutionary coup' by reactionary forces, and to have plans for a general strike and a campaign of civil disobedience prepared in reserve.⁴⁸

One of the highlights of the Congress was the presence at the opening of the head of the UAOC, Patriarch Mstyslav, who had recently finally been allowed by the Soviet authorities to travel to Ukraine. The joy was marred, however, by the fact that despite protests from Rukh's leaders and representatives of the Kyiv City Council, the Moscow Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church went ahead with a visit to Kyiv by Patriarch Aleksii II. On the final day of the Congress, therefore, many of the participants in the Rukh Congress joined members of the UAOC in a demonstration outside St. Sophia's Cathedral to protest against the visit of the Russian Orthodox Patriarch. In fact, the protesters' aim appeared to be to prevent him from entering St Sophia's and to reinforce the campaign for the transfer of the Cathedral to the UAOC. There were ugly scenes and once again the official media did not waste the opportunity depict Rukh and the UAOC as extremists.⁴⁹

Both within Rukh and outside it, there were, of course, more radical and uncompromising groups and politicians than the movement's mainstream. Khmara, for example, had urged the Rukh Congress to ban Communists from its ranks and he, and other militants, such as his colleague in the radical wing of the URP

The main speeches delivered at the Congress were published in *Suchasnist*, January 1991.

⁴⁸ The author was an observer at both the Congress and the protest.

Roman Koval, made no secret of their desire to destabilize the political situation in the republic, because for them stabilization meant the perpetuation of the political status quo. Disappointed by the way in which the students' protest had ended, some of these organizations and individuals promptly sought to form an alliance to continue their 'uncompromising' political struggle. They included the Inter-Party Assembly, which had been formed in the summer as a coalition of small, radical, nationalist organizations and which was headed by Yurii Shukhevych, the son of the commander in chief of the UPA, Taras Chuprynka, alias Roman Shukhevych. Its members did not believe that there was any sense in trying to work within the system and they criticized Rukh and the People's Council for doing so. Instead, the Inter-Party Assembly advocated a mass campaign of collecting signatures from people ready to declare themselves citizens of a Ukrainian People's Republic and, when a sufficient number had been gathered, to convene a Ukrainian National Congress to replace the Communist-dominated Supreme Soviet.⁵⁰

New moderate political parties and movements were also developing or being formed, though. For instance, the Organization of the Mothers of Soldiers of Ukraine - a group campaigning for Ukrainian recruits to do their military service on the territory of the republic and against bullying and other cruel practices in the Soviet army —had held its founding congress in Zaporizhzhya on 8 and 9 September; later that month, the Party of the Greens of Ukraine had convened its first congress; and in October the Democratic Party of Ukraine (DPU) unveiled its programme. Another group whose plans were attracting attention were the twenty-eight deputies belonging to the Democratic Platform who, after the Declaration of State Sovereignty, had announced that they were leaving the CPU. At the beginning of December they were to hold the founding congress of the Party for the Democratic Revival of Ukraine (PDRU), whose leaders included Filenko, Hrynov, Yemets, Khmelko and Popovych. All these parties supported independence.

The dramatic Ukrainian 'October' came to a close with the democratic forces confident that, thanks to the students' hunger strike, they had achieved a further hard-won victory. The

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⁵⁰ Haran, *To Kill the Dragon*, pp. 135-6.

breakthrough appeared to have demonstrated that while the CPU could certainly still affect the pace of change, it could not control events through its majority in the parliament or alter the general direction in which things were moving. The mass protests in the capital, which it seemed had taken the republic to the very brink, had reduced the prospect of Ukraine's signing a new Union treaty in the near future and instead had sharpened the focus on the issues of the dismantling of Communist rule and the achievement of independence. When, at the end of the month, the parliament formed a Constitutional Commission charged with drawing up a document which would outline the 'concept', or fundamental principles, of a new republican constitution, the opportunity for effecting a decisive break with the past seemed to be at hand.

But there was also an unexpected development at the very end of the month which brought home the seriousness of the economic crisis in which the republic found itself and which for a time was to divert attention away from issues such as the Union treaty. Just as the parliament began the process of endorsing a successor to Masol — both the majority's and the opposition's initial nominees, Volodymyr Slyednov and Volodymyr Pylypchuk respectively, failed to get enough votes — the acting head of the government, Fokin, proposed the immediate introduction of a republican system of non-transferable coupons for up to 70% of the roubles earned each month by Ukrainian citizens. Arguing that such a move was necessary to protect the Ukrainian consumer sector from buyers from other republics, he depicted it as a temporary step 'until the creation of a separate Ukrainian currency'. Though taken aback by the secrecy with which this measure had been prepared, the deputies voted to implement it from 1 November.

The CPU counter-attacks

Dissatisfaction with the way things were going was widespread not only within the CPSU but was also becoming increasingly apparent among the Soviet officer corps and the secret police. Gorbachev was coming under increasing criticism, and rumours of a possible military coup abounded. In Ukraine, too, even as the democratic forces were celebrating an important victory, reactionary elements were preparing to strike back.

A fortnight after their triumph, Kyiv's students came out with a

new challenge to the CPU: they called for the traditional military parade in the capital on the anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution to be cancelled. Both sides dug their heels in and the danger of a potential clash, this time possibly involving the armed forces, grew. Fortunately, the Kyiv City Council proposed a compromise: the military parade would be moved from Kyiv's main avenue, Khreshchatyk, to a square in another part of the city, and the students would also be allowed to hold their own demonstration elsewhere in the capital. The more radical youth remained determined to prevent the military parade but on the night of 6 November the riot police drove them from the square where the parade was to take place.

The following morning, Khmara and a group of his colleagues appear to have been lured into a trap set by the security forces. After a woman had approached the radical deputy in an underpass claiming that she had just been assaulted, he and his friends seized the suspect and attempted to detain and search him. The man, who did not identify himself, resisted. He turned out to be armed with a gun and to be carrying the documents of a police colonel. The entire incident was secretly filmed by the police. A few days later, film of Khmara and his colleagues 'assaulting' the plain-clothes police officer - a certain Colonel Hryhoryev - was shown on republican and central Soviet television. It was evident enough to the opposition that the 'partocracy' was seeking to discredit it and to take revenge for the events of the previous month. By striking at the radical wing, the Communist authorities were evidently also hoping to provoke the militants and to split the opposition.

There were more signs that hard-line forces were launching a counter-attack. At the military parade, General Gromov, still a member of the CPU Politburo, declared: 'We will pronounce a decisive "No!" to all extremists, nationalists, separatists. . . We will not yield... we will defend the gains of the revolution... the greatest event of the twentieth century.'⁵¹ Moreover, on 11 November, *Radyanska Ukraina* published a lengthy appeal addressed to the Presidium of the parliament from the hard-line former Party boss of the Odesa region, Kryuchkov, who was still a deputy in the USSR Supreme Soviet, in which he criticized the Presidium for having put off the decision about joining a new Union treaty. What was particularly striking about this statement, though, was Kryuchkov's

⁵¹ Pavlychko, *Letters from Kiev*, pp. 109.

attack against Kravchuk, whom he accused of helping 'those who strive to prevent the signing of a new Union treaty [and] to destroy the union of Soviet republics'.

When, on the following day, the parliament resumed its work, pro-Communist demonstrators from the Odesa, Mykolaiv and Kherson regions in the south were bussed in, despite the continuing ban on protests in the vicinity; they picketed the parliament building with Soviet flags and placards supporting the signing of a new Union treaty. They were joined by protesting police officers who called for a new law on the militia, the enforcement of law and order and the disciplining of radical deputies who had participated in recent 'disturbances'. Subsequently, *Radyanska Ukraina* was to publish another appeal, this time from some of the demonstrators from the southern regions, calling for among other things, the parliament to revoke its concessions to the students and to establish a bicameral republican legislature which would have a Council of Nationalities in which 'millions of citizens of a non-Ukrainian nationality should be represented'.⁵²

The demonstrations staged by the Soviet loyalists from Ukraine's southern regions appeared to represent both a renewed effort to mobilize a broad Interfront movement and an implicit warning that if the republic continued on the road towards independence its unity and territorial integrity would be threatened. Recent events in neighbouring Moldova had graphically demonstrated these dangers. There, the Moldovan resurgence had alarmed the republic's national minorities, and conservative Communists had played on the fears of forcible Romanization and Moldova's possible reunification with Romania; in the late summer, secessionist movements of Russians and Russified Ukrainians on the left bank of the Dniester and the Gagauz in the south had proclaimed their own break-away 'Soviet Socialist Republics' and asked Moscow to recognize them as 'republics within the structure of the USSR'. At the beginning of November, the first major clashes between the Moldovan authorities and a Russian paramilitary detachment had resulted in several deaths.

In Ukraine, potential problems with centrifugal tendencies existed in the Donbas, where attempts were being made to found an Interfront; in the Odesa region, where a former adviser to the breakaway Dniester Republic, Oleksii Surylov, was promoting the

⁵² *Radyanska Ukraina*, 13 November 1990.

idea of Novorossiia, or New Russia, encompassing the self-proclaimed Dniester Republic, the Odesa, Mykolaiv and Kherson regions, and Crimea; and in Transcarpathia, where the Society of Carpathian Ruthenians maintained that the Ruthenians were a nation distinct from the Ukrainians and was campaigning for regional autonomy. But the problem was most acute in Crimea. Here orthodox Communist politicians and pro-Russian forces had combined to defend the status quo by seeking, on the one hand, to block Ukrainian influences, and on the other, to keep the Crimean Tatars, more and more of whom were returning to the peninsula, in check. After the Declaration of Ukraine's State Sovereignty and the Ukrainian parliament's postponement of its decision concerning the Union treaty, both the leadership of the Crimean Party organization and the regional soviet had stepped up the campaign for regional self-determination and the restoration of Crimea's autonomy.⁵³

On the same day that the Ukrainian parliament reconvened after the holiday for the celebrations of the Bolshevik revolution, the Crimean regional soviet held an extraordinary session devoted to the issues of Crimea's status and the new Union treaty. With the majority of Crimean deputies backing the idea of calling a local referendum on Crimea's self-determination, the seriousness of the situation was demonstrated by the fact that the chairman of the Ukrainian parliament was also present at the session in Simferopol. After listening to a barrage of complaints and allegations about Ukrainian nationalism and separatism and calls for an autonomous Crimea to rejoin the Russian Federation — the session was broadcast live throughout the peninsula — Kravchuk sought to dissuade the Crimean deputies from attempting to break away from Ukraine or calling a local referendum, and to placate them by holding out the prospect of the creation of a Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic within the Ukrainian SSR. The growing crisis in relations between Kyiv and Simferopol remained unresolved, however, for the Crimean regional soviet went ahead and issued a declaration calling for the restoration of Crimea's statehood in the form of the Crimean ASSR 'as a subject of the USSR and a party to the Union

⁵³ For an overview of these issues, see Roman Solchanyk, 'The Politics of State Building: Centre-Periphery Relations in Post-Soviet Ukraine', *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 46, no. 1 (1994), pp. 47-68.

treaty' and also voted to hold a local referendum on 20 January 1991 on the peninsula's future status.⁵⁴

While the implications of the Crimean Soviet's decision, and of Gorbachev being heckled and jeered at a meeting in Moscow with disgruntled military deputies, were being discussed in Kyiv, on 14 November the Ukrainian parliament was able to agree on a successor to Masol. The compromise choice for the new head of the government was Fokin who, while hardly a bold reformer, seemed ready to cooperate with the opposition and to defend the republic's sovereignty.⁵⁵ Despite this display of cooperation, later that same day the majority, including Kravchuk and Plyushch, ignored the protests of the opposition and voted to strip Khmara of his parliamentary immunity.

On 16 November, on the eve of the announcement by the Soviet leader of yet another reorganization of the Soviet state and government structures, and as if responding to Kryuchkov, Kravchuk vented his frustration and anger with Gorbachev and the centre for the deepening crisis in which the Union found itself. He told a meeting of veterans in Kyiv that the central authorities had 'split the country, let the levers [of power] out of their hands, [and] the mass media'. They were now seeking a way of restoring order and looking for scapegoats. Either they faced up to the responsibility of dealing with the tasks before them, or they should have the courage to admit: 'we can't'. 'It was not us in Ukraine who began' the 'destruction of Soviet society', he declared, and 'we will never stir up the people' to destroy the Soviet system. 'But if the central power continues to relinquish the levers, as it is doing now, we will assume the responsibility ourselves.'⁵⁶

Whether or not the Khmara case was meant to demonstrate this 'resolve', and what precisely Kravchuk himself thought on the matter, remains uncertain. But on the following day, as excitement was being generated by the news of Yeltsin's imminent visit to Kyiv, the deputy was arrested in the parliament building on the recommendation of the republican General Procurator. Members

See the reports on the session in *Radyanska Ukraina*, 14 November 1990, and *Molod Ukraina*, 15 November 1990.

Fokin had elaborated his views for the opposition in a lengthy interview in *Litcratuma Ukraina*, 4 October 1990.

⁵⁶ Radio Kyiv, 16 November 1990.

of the opposition were outraged: even if they did not agree with Khmara's militancy, they were appalled by the way that a fellow deputy had been treated and by the precedent which was being set.

On top of this, on 21 November, the majority also pushed through changes in the voting procedure whereby in the case of the opposition refusing to cast their ballots, only half of the total number of deputies would suffice to constitute a quorum, and decisions could be approved by a majority of those participating. Indicating the feelings of the his colleagues, Chornovil issued a statement declaring that he refused to be reduced to a mere 'statistic' by the 'reactionary parliamentary majority' while it continued its 'betrayal of Ukraine and the destruction of its economy', and that in protest he was returning to his constituency.⁵⁷

With demonstrations against Khmara's arrest beginning in the capital and the prospect of the mass arrival in Kyiv of his supporters from Western Ukraine, the situation once again became very tense. Fearing the worst, moderates in the People's Council successfully appealed to Western Ukrainians to stay away so as not to aggravate matters. Apart from organizing further demonstrations in the capital and continuing to protest in the parliament itself, there was little that the opposition could do for the moment to blunt the CPU's counter-offensive.

External relations and Russia

The overall picture though was not entirely gloomy. While the confrontation between the competing political forces continued, Ukraine was making further significant strides in asserting its sovereignty in foreign policy. In mid-October, during the height of the student protests, the Polish Foreign Minister Krzysztof Skubiszewski had visited Kyiv and placed the links which had been forged by Ukrainian and Polish democrats on a new footing. He signed a Ukrainian-Polish declaration of friendship and good-neighbourly relations in which the two 'sovereign states' recognized each other's sovereignty and existing borders. A few days later, Ukraine and Belarus signed bilateral agreement[^] promoting closer ties and cooperation between their two 'sovereign states'.

In the first half of the following month, while preparations were

apparently being made behind the scenes for a visit to Kyiv by Yeltsin and the signing of a Ukrainian-Russian treaty, Ukraine formally asserted its claim to direct participation in the Helsinki process. First, Foreign Minister Zlenko addressed a letter to his French counterpart, Roland Dumas, requesting that Ukraine be allowed to participate directly in a forthcoming summit of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in Paris. After the Soviet Foreign Ministry refused to recognize Ukraine's claim to separate representation, Zlenko and his colleagues demonstratively withdrew from the Soviet delegation. Then, in what was probably his first real foray into international affairs, Kravchuk addressed an appeal presenting the Ukrainian case to the participants of the meeting in Paris. The message was delivered by Pavlychko, his deputy in the parliamentary commission on foreign relations, Bohdan Horyn, and Drach who, together with the Baltic and Armenian representatives also seeking separate representation for their republics, carried on lobbying in Paris.

Kravchuk's appeal defied Moscow not only because it challenged the centre's right to speak on behalf of Ukraine and the other republics but also because it rejected the traditional image of Ukraine as a mere province of Russia. 'Ukraine is a large European state and its history and culture are an integral part of European civilization,' the appeal declared. Moreover, the fact that leading democrats were publicizing an appeal signed by their political adversary, Kravchuk, at a major European forum, also underscored the extent to which national Communist elements within the CPU were making common cause with the more moderate figures within the opposition — from whom they were bitterly divided on other issues — in defending Ukraine's sovereignty and wanting to see their republic take its place in the international community of states.⁵⁸

Meanwhile, while Gorbachev was finalizing the preparation of the new Union treaty, Ukraine, like the Russian Federation, was also seeking to develop direct horizontal ties with the other sovereign Union republics. Clearly, for Ukraine, the regularization of bilateral relations with the Russian Federation was crucial and the fact that Yeltsin and his democratic supporters were in power in

On the first stages of Ukraine's new sovereign foreign policy, see the author's 'Ukraine is Claiming its Rightful Place in Europe', *Wall Street Journal* (European edition), 30 November 1990.

Russia and were themselves challenging the imperial centre offered a unique window of opportunity. Yeltsin might not have had much time for the nationalities question in the past but his continuing political struggle as the leader of the sovereign Russian Federation with Gorbachev and the centre had led him to come out against the continuation of empire and in support of the transformation of the USSR into a loose voluntary union of sovereign states. At the same time, following the Declaration of Ukraine's State Sovereignty, the continuing paralysis of power in Moscow, and the slow but steady emergence of a national Communist tendency within the CPU, Kravchuk, Ukraine's still Communist leader, who in the past would have viewed Yeltsin as a renegade, had been left with little choice but to do business with him. Furthermore, both leaders were aware of the need for cooperation and understanding between them in facing up to Gorbachev's determination to preserve as much as he could of the old Union; in view of the possibility that the Soviet leader might try to impose a Union treaty on the republics by, for instance, having it approved by the conservative Soviet parliament, this was becoming a matter of some urgency.

There was one other important factor for Kravchuk and the leaders of the other non-Russian republics to reckon with. As the centre's authority continued to decline, the RSFSR seemed poised to fill the power vacuum. After meeting alone with Gorbachev for the first time since the end of August on 11 November, Yeltsin revealed that the Soviet leader had been urging the RSFSR to sign a new Union treaty first and settle all other issues later. For his part, Yeltsin had proposed the creation of a coalition government which would be 'an extraordinary anti-crisis committee, formed on the basis of equal rights, from representatives of the Union republics', with the RSFSR naming the key ministers. He had also insisted on agreements covering the division of functions and property between the central government and the RSFSR. As far as the non-Russian republics were concerned, a deal between Gorbachev and Yeltsin could ultimately cut both ways. For instance, and fortunately in this case for official Kyiv, Yeltsin revealed that he and Gorbachev had discussed the situation in Crimea and had agreed not to apply any pressure on Ukraine as 'experience' showed that outside interference would only have a destabilizing effect.^{5<J} In fact, however,

^w See the accounts of the meeting between Gorbachev and Yeltsin by Vitalii

the prospect of a deal between Gorbachev and Yeltsin receded when, on 16 November, the Soviet leader addressed the USSR Supreme Soviet and asked for the third time that year to be granted fresh powers.

On 19 November, while Gorbachev was attending the opening of the CSCE summit in Paris and warning that any efforts to dismantle the Soviet Union would unleash 'militant nationalism and reckless separatism', which would lead to the 'Balkanization' or 'Lebanization' of entire regions and undermine Europe's stability, Yeltsin carried out his historic official visit to Ukraine. In the event, the results probably surpassed the expectations of even the most optimistic of his Ukrainian hosts.

Greeting the Russian delegation, Kravchuk stressed the 'enormous significance' of the treaty which the two sovereign republics were about to sign. He also noted that Ukraine wanted to see the USSR transformed into a union of sovereign states and that it was important that the Soviet parliament officially recognize the sovereignty which the republics had proclaimed so that the centre would not be able to disregard this fact in the new Union treaty. Yeltsin responded with the following words of reassurance:

We think that after the signing of our treaty, it will be easier for us. It's still possible for the centre to apply pressure on Ukraine and Russia. But it's not possible to apply pressure on the 200 million people of two great republics. On our part, there will be no retreat from sovereignty.⁶⁰

In his subsequent address to the Ukrainian parliament, the Russian leader called for the opening of a new chapter in the history of the relations between the two neighbouring Slavic peoples. Alluding to their troubled past, he acknowledged:

We are only just beginning to examine our history systematically and objectively. But already it's clear that it's considerably more complex and not as straightforward as it had earlier seemed. . . . We understand that in the history of our two peoples there were not only shining pages but also much that was bitter and unjust.

Portnikov in *Molod Ukrainy*, 14 November 1990, and in Morrison, *Boris Yeltsin*, pp. 200-1.

⁶⁰ *Radyanska Ukraina*, 20 November 1990.

After referring to some of the darker moments which the two peoples had experienced during the Soviet period, and the colossal human price which they had paid as a result of ending up 'in a totalitarian state', Yeltsin stated that the realization of the need to change direction, however belated, called for the 'revival of our republics' and the establishment of 'normal' healthy relations between them.

In proposing the basis for a qualitatively new Russian-Ukrainian relationship, the Russian leader reiterated most of the principles which the Russian and Ukrainian democrats had affirmed several months earlier in their joint declaration. The first was that relations between the two republics should be based on equality. Significantly, in stating this, Yeltsin went out of his way to renounce any imperial role for Russia. 'I categorically reject the allegation that Russia is now claiming some special role,' he declared, adding:

Russia does not aspire to become the centre of some sort of new empire, to obtain advantages in comparison with the other republics. Russia understands better than others the harmfulness of that role, inasmuch as it was Russia which for a long time performed precisely that role. What did it gain from this? Did Russians become free as a result? Wealthy? Happy? You yourselves know the truth, [for] history has taught us: a people that rules over others cannot be fortunate... . We are categorical opponents of a unitary state.

The other principles Yeltsin listed were: that relations between Ukraine and Russia should be those between 'sovereign states'; no interference in each other's internal affairs; good-neighbourliness; the exclusion of the use of force, blackmail and pressure against each other; and, that Russian-Ukrainian relations 'should have their own logic' and not be 'dependent on the Union treaty'.

Speaking quite forthrightly, the Russian leader told the Ukrainian deputies that the days when the centre could impose its *diktat* on the republics 'were over', and that now that the republics had asserted their sovereignty there would be 'no going back'. But the centre was 'fiercely resisting' the attempts of the sovereign republics to establish horizontal ties and the curtailing of its old 'monopolistic' powers. The Soviet president was rushing ahead with new plans, without consulting the republics, to shore up the centre's power by switching to a presidential system of government. There could be no illusions: the time for decisions had arrived and they could not

be put off. In view of these challenges and new opportunities, Yeltsin said that the conclusion of a treaty between Russia and Ukraine was 'a very timely step' and he expressed the hope that it would usher in the 'most important, most interesting and most meaningful' period of their mutual relations.⁶¹

Later that day, Yeltsin and Kravchuk signed a formal broad-ranging treaty between their two republics in which all of the above principles were enshrined. Most importantly, the two republics recognized each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity 'within their currently existing borders within the confines of the USSR', the civil liberties and cultural rights of the national minorities living on their respective territories, and agreed to foster cooperation in the economic, defence, foreign policy, ecological and other spheres, and to exchange representatives. The treaty, which hardly referred to the USSR and completely ignored the Union treaty and the centre, was to remain in force for ten years.⁶² The two leaders also signed a joint declaration in which they called on the central authorities and the Soviet parliament to recognize the sovereignty of the republics and the rights of each people to self-determination. Stopping short of describing the USSR as an empire, they described the declarations of sovereignty adopted by the republics as reflecting new political realities and being aimed at 'the assertion of the real sovereignty of the republics and the liquidation of totalitarian structures which have outlived themselves'.⁶

At the press conference which followed, Yeltsin again stressed the historic significance of this move to place Russian-Ukrainian relations on a new footing. Earlier in the day, the Russian leader had symbolically presented Kravchuk with a copy of the Pereyaslav Agreement which had been discovered in the Russian archives. He noted, however, that unlike in 1654, the present treaty had been concluded on the basis of the equality of the two states and as such was the first of its kind in the long history of the relations between the two peoples. To underscore that this was a turning point, the treaty had been signed in Kyiv and not in Moscow. Responding to journalists' questions, he said, among other things: that the new Union treaty had to take into account the sovereignty of the

⁶¹ *Molod Ukrainy*, 2 December 1990.

⁶² *Radyanska Ukraina*, 21 November 1990.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 21 November 1990.

republics and had to be a treaty of sovereign states; that the idea of a treaty between the three Slavic peoples of the USSR was being floated (by Belarus) and that this was something which it would be hard for the centre to struggle with; and that he viewed Crimea as an internal Ukrainian affair. As in his speech to the Ukrainian parliament, Yeltsin also noted that in some respects Ukraine had gone further than the Russian Federation in asserting its sovereignty — he cited the examples of foreign policy and the decision that Ukrainian recruits should serve on the territory of their republic — and added that the Russian Federation would have 'to catch up'. Summarizing what had just been achieved in Kyiv, he concluded his remarks with the words: 'We will fight together!'⁶⁴

Apart from its historic significance, then, the conclusion of the Russian-Ukrainian treaty provided a great boost to both Yeltsin and Kravchuk at a very tricky moment when conservative forces were on the offensive and, the USSR Congress of the People's Deputies, scheduled to convene again in December, was preparing to discuss Gorbachev's proposals for a new Union treaty and giving him more executive powers. But no sooner had Yeltsin returned to Moscow than it became evident that the treaty would not be greeted as enthusiastically in Russia as in Ukraine and that the potential problems in Russian-Ukrainian relations had in fact only been temporarily glossed over.

In Kyiv, the treaty produced a brief display of unity within Ukraine's divided parliament and on 22 November the deputies voted unanimously for its ratification. But even in Ukraine, it was made apparent that not everyone welcomed the breakthrough in Russian-Ukrainian relations and the demonstration of cooperation and solidarity between Kravchuk and Yeltsin. The Russian leader's address to the Ukrainian parliament was 'blocked' from being broadcast five in the republic and from being covered by all-Union television. This led the People's Council to issue a statement protesting against the 'informational discrimination' against Yeltsin and calling for an apology to be made to the Russian Federation. Journalists also noticed that Hurenko was not present at the talks between the Ukrainian and Russian delegations - the Ukrainian delegation had, however, included leaders of the opposition — and, at the press conference, had even asked Yeltsin about this.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, and *Robotnycha hazeta* and *Molod Ukrainy*, 21 November 1990.

In Moscow, also on 22 November, the first attempt to ratify the treaty failed. Some Russian deputies insisted that the problem of Crimea would first have to be resolved, while others argued that the agreement went against the idea of a new Union treaty. Complaints were also voiced that Yeltsin had not kept deputies informed about the Russian-Ukrainian treaty negotiations. The following day, though, after 'energetic pressure' from Yeltsin, the Russian parliament ratified the treaty; 140 deputies voted for its ratification, 6 against, and 40 abstained.

A Moscow-based Ukrainian journalist who interviewed a cross-section of Russian deputies at the time reported that there was considerable concern among them not only about the Crimean issue but also about the broader question of Russia's borders with Ukraine and other republics and, in the event of the dissolution of the USSR, what would happen to the Russians who would end up in the new independent non-Russian states. As Colonel General Dmitrii Volkogonov put it, if it had been made clear in the treaty that Ukraine intended to remain united with Russia in some form of a Slavic union or under a new Union treaty, there would be no 'territorial questions' and the Russian Supreme Soviet would have ratified the treaty unanimously. But 'if Ukraine is not with us in a union', the issue of borders and territory was likely to arise. The journalist also observed that the Russian parliament was generally poorly informed about the situation in Ukraine because, as seen from Moscow, the turbulent republic remained 'a total blank spot'.⁶⁵

The signing of the Russian-Ukrainian treaty did not ease the strained political situation in Ukraine. The acrimonious confrontation between the Communist forces and their adversaries continued and, despite more protests, Khmara remained in prison. Nevertheless, during the following weeks the parliament was able to carry out some constructive work and Ukraine signed agreements with other Union republics. Events in Moscow, however, were to cast a shadow over Ukraine's efforts to assert its sovereignty.